

Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Whitfield
Subcommittee on Energy and Power and
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Joint Legislative Hearing
July 12, 2012
(As Prepared for Delivery)

This is the twenty-fourth day of our hearing on the American Energy Initiative. Today we will discuss two bills related to energy policy and the role of the federal government, the "No More Solyndras Act" and the "Smart Energy Act."

We are joined this morning by my good friend Cliff Stearns, chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. His subcommittee has done the American people a great service by investigating the Solyndra debacle and bringing it to light.

In my view, Solyndra is very troublesome for two reasons. First, the federal government chose to give a half-billion dollar loan guarantee to a company so inept that it has gone bankrupt and left the American taxpayer holding the bag, and second, the fact that George Kaiser, a major investor in Solyndra, was also a major political fundraiser for President Obama.

Solyndra is not the only instance of a loan guarantee recipient going bankrupt or having major administration supporters among its ownership interests. All things considered, there is more than enough reason to declare the program a failure and put an end to it, and that is what the No More Solyndras Act does.

Clearly the loan guarantee program has not delivered any technological breakthroughs that will benefit the American people. And this should not be surprising. In my view, such government handouts are evidence that Washington has lost sight of this nation's true entrepreneurial spirit.

Alexander Graham Bell, Henry Ford, the Wright Brothers, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and many others – America has a tradition of innovators that is the envy of the world, and they all accomplished great things without receiving a big check from the government.

Of course, one obstacle these entrepreneurs did not face was the excessive regulatory red tape of the kind this administration has been piling on since 2009. Eliminating this red tape and unleashing private sector innovation has been a key goal of my subcommittee, and I believe that removing these regulatory roadblocks would accomplish far more to facilitate energy breakthroughs than loan guarantees and other government handouts.

In my view, the federal government should get its own house in order rather than trying to interfere with the private sector. That is why we are also going to hear about the "Smart Energy Act," which among other things seeks increased energy efficiency in federal buildings.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in restoring the proper role for the government on energy policy.

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